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# The Coordination Of Multiple Roles By Female Graduate Students From Three Different Cultures

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THE COORDINATION OF MULTIPLE ROLES BY FEMALE  
GRADUATE STUDENTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT CULTURE

SRIVASTAVA

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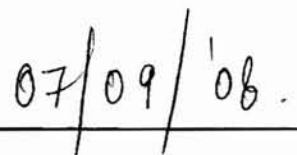
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THE COORDINATION OF MULTIPLE ROLES BY FEMALE GRADUATE

STUDENTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT CULTURES

BY

SMITA SRIVASTAVA

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF ARTS IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2008

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## ABSTRACT

This research studied the coordination of multiple roles by female graduate students who are mothers. Zika (2006) reported that working women in the developed world contribute 40 to 50 percent of the gross national product at the same time that they continue to be responsible for most of the household and childcare responsibilities in the home. Some researchers have suggested that having multiple roles can be deleterious, while others have suggested benefits. Because women from around the world today are participating in multiple roles, the present study investigated, using a qualitative research method, how three female graduate students from different cultures who are also wives and mothers coordinated and viewed the various roles in their lives. Data were collected through an interview format and examined using narrative analysis techniques. Despite being raised in three different cultures, common themes in the interview responses emerged and included the importance of the motherhood role, women's ongoing family and household responsibilities, feelings of stress, the usefulness of spousal and social support, and parents as role models. The three women participating viewed their caregiver roles, especially the role of mother, as primary, and at the same time voluntarily chose to expand their identities and the number of roles they needed to coordinate by working professionally and academically outside of the home. Although there was a consensus regarding positive benefits as a result of having multiple roles, evidence for both role conflict and role expansion theories was evident in the women's responses.

### Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate my thesis to God whose constant blessings have given birth to the potential researcher in me. My faith in Him always empowered me with the courage to help me cross each hurdle that I came across as I did this thesis. I feel an immense sense of gratification today at being able to do my thesis on a topic that I have been so passionate about.

Also, I dedicate my thesis to all those women who simultaneously try to manage the onerous task of balancing their personal and professional lives. Motherhood is that natural instinct that all women are born with and it is the same instinct that draws them closer to their family lives, making it harder for most women to choose their careers over their families. The idea is not to excel at either or both of these two fronts for these women, but to enlarge their identities on a professional platform allowing them with an opportunity to carve a specialized (professional) identity of themselves beyond the natural care giver's identity that they are born with in their family roles.

### Acknowledgements

This thesis will always bear my name on it but the credit to make it what it is today is shared by a lot of people. I wish to acknowledge each of them for their respective contributions.

First of all, I would like to thank God for the strength he bestowed me with to accomplish the unprecedented task of working on this thesis successfully. I dedicate my motivation, perseverance and vigor to complete this thesis to His wishes.

My biggest source of inspiration has originated from the immense love, support, and trust I have received from my wonderful family. My parents, Pushapjeet and Paresh, have imbibed in me great moral and ethical values that have made me the person I am today. Those values came across time and again as I dealt with various challenges while I worked on this thesis. My sister, Shweta and brother-in-law, Sandeep have been my greatest supporters at a time when I was away from my parents and home for the first time in life. I cannot thank them all enough for what they have been and mean to me.

Niyati has not only been a roommate but played the role of a true friend, family and a fellow budding clinician, like me. Her valuable feedback, whether in the form of critique or appreciation, has always been a catalyst for my growth. As I worked on my thesis in the last one year, she has literally been with me throughout this entire phase, always available to listen to me, talk to me, to literally help me stay mentally at peace as I led a strenuous professional and personal life.

In the last one year, a special someone who colored my life with abundant love and happiness was always by my side and helped me stay motivated and focused to

achieve the grueling task of accomplishing this thesis on time. His presence in my life has meant more than I could ever even imagine. I thank him for everything... Literally☺!

The inspiration that germinated the idea to study graduate students, who are mothers, as they play multiple roles in their work and family life, belongs to those classmates of mine who I saw struggling through this experience. I acknowledge the contributions of Koyeli Sengupta and Catherine Morgan who provided me with the first flashing insight to study this issue in a cross-cultural context.

My friends and extended family, back home in India, have always lavished me with their support through their prayers, blessings and best wishes and I thank them all for the profuse encouragement I still continue to receive from them.

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### The Coordination of Multiple Roles by Female Graduate Students from Three Different Cultures

Zika reported that in prosperous countries, girls' educational achievement is higher than boys, women receive more university degrees than men, and women occupy most of the new work positions. Because of these trends, she predicted that women in the future will hold the greater share of professional jobs and referred to women as the "new motor of global growth" (2006, p. 25). Zika also recognized that although working women in the developed world contribute 40 to 50 percent of the gross national product, they still continue to be responsible for most of the household and childcare responsibilities in their homes. The present study investigated using a qualitative research method, how female graduate students from various cultures coordinate these multiple roles.

Because the division of labor both at home and in the workplace is often based on gender (Cabrera and Peters, 2000), this paper begins by describing how culture is relevant for the development of gender, as well as the relevant theories of gender role development.

#### *Gender and Culture*

Helgeson (2002) made a clear distinction between the often misused and misunderstood terms of sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological categories of male and female, as distinguished by genes, chromosomes, and hormones. Sex, therefore, is the biological difference in the genetic composition and reproductive structures and functions in women and men. Culture does not play a role in determining one's sex. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the much more fluid categories of feminine and

masculine. Gender consists of the traits, interests, and behaviors that cultures associate with each sex (e.g., what is considered feminine and what's considered masculine in the culture). Gender roles refer to the social functions that society sees as suitable for a feminine person and a masculine person. Gender, therefore, is a socially constructed concept that refers to how differences between girls and boys and women and men are created and explained by society. While one's sex is biologically determined, gender develops or is learned based on life experiences within one's culture. Culture is thought to play a significant role in shaping an individual's gender-related ideas and behavior (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978). For instance, Williams and Best (1990) examined how individuals believed themselves to be (actual self), how they would like to be (ideal self), and how female and males should be (ideology of gender) in fourteen countries. They found small cultural differences in reports of actual or ideal self, but large cultural differences in ideas of gender. In countries with higher socioeconomic development, with higher percentages of highly educated women, and with larger percentages of women employed outside of the home, the researchers reported that gender ideology was related to equality between women and men. In other countries, however, gender ideology emphasized the desirability for gender differences between women and men.

Research has shown that basic gender differences between females and males originate at a very early age and continue throughout the lifespan (Frieze et al., 1978). Gender identity is a concept that describes each person's psychological perception of being feminine or masculine and is thought to develop early in childhood. Several

theorists have suggested how ideas about gender might develop in children. A summary of these theories is next.

### *Theories of Gender Role Development*

*Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory.* Freud suggested that children pass through five stages of psychosexual development. He proposed that children learn to adopt the feminine or masculine role by identifying with their same-sex parent in the phallic or third psychosexual stage, at approximately four to six years of age (Frieze, et al., 1978). Freud gave little attention to the role of society or culture in shaping gender identity. According to Freud, children of both sexes develop their notions of gender largely based on the personalities of their same-sex parents. Freud's theory was based on his belief in the superiority of the male and the phallus.

*Social Learning Theory.* Unlike the psychoanalytic theory, the social learning theory emphasized the surrounding social environment in influencing children's development of gender. Social learning theory (Mischel, 1966) emphasized the importance of environmental determinants of gender development (rewards and models) and suggested that behaviors precede cognitions (e.g., "I have been rewarded for doing boy things, I must be a boy"). Mischel's ideas were an outgrowth of the learning-based approaches quite popular at that time. The social learning theories proposed that others' reactions serve as the main motivation for learning gender roles. Bandura and Bussey (1999) described three major determinants of the gender conceptions we develop that are based on social learning theory. The first one is modeling or imitation and observational learning. That is, children acquire their gender-related behaviors by observing and imitating the behaviors they view others performing, such as their same-sex parent,



teachers, and others they come in contact with through their experiences and the mass media. The second mode is through enactive experiences, like those that are learned as a result of consequences for how one behaves. For instance, positive reinforcement or rewards for what the culture considers gender-appropriate behaviors make those actions more likely to occur in the future and punishment or criticism for gender-inappropriate behaviors makes other behaviors less likely to occur in the future. The third means of influence is through direct tuition that involves talking to children about different styles of conduct and their linkage to gender. Discussions about “what girls do” and “what girls don’t do” are examples.

*Cognitive-Developmental Perspective.* Cognitive processes have also been suggested as contributing to the development of gender. In contrast to Mischel’s (1966) ideas about the importance of the social environment, Kohlberg (1966) emphasized the importance of children’s growing understanding of gender categories and their permanent placement into one of them. He proposed that such cognitions precede behaviors (e.g., “I am a boy and thus like to do boy things”). Kohlberg’s heavy reliance on Piaget’s work at a time when developmental psychologists were showing great interest in this work increased the likelihood that Kohlberg’s theory would become a major influence on the direction of the field of gender development.

One highlight of the cognitive-developmental theory to gender development is the emphasis on gender schemas. The original theory that explained these gender schemas was Bem’s (1981) ‘gender schema theory’ that proposed that the phenomenon of sex typing derives, in part, from gender-based schematic processing, from a generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute

the gender schema. In particular, the theory proposed that sex typing results from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated to the gender schema.

Martin, Ruble and Szkrybalo (2002) supported the cognitive perspectives (based on the cognitive-developmental theory and gender-schema theory) for gender development that emphasized gender constancy. Gender constancy represents the developing understanding of the invariance or permanence of gender, similar to the concrete-operational concept of conservation of physical properties. Martin et al., also emphasized that gender development involves an active construction of the meaning of gender categories, initiated internally by the child rather than externally by socialization agents, as suggested by social learning theorists. Finally, mastery or competence motivation was considered a driving force in gender development, as children seek to bring their perceptions and behaviors in line with their developing knowledge about gender categories.

It is interesting how the cognitive-developmental perspective emphasized the role of the child and the child's thinking in her or his own socialization and how different cognitive and environmental events relate to the acquisition of gender identity and gender roles. Based on the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, cognitive development theorists have described how children acquire their gender identity through cognitive structures that motivate children to categorize their world along a female-male dimension. Near the end of the sensorimotor stage, the child becomes aware that he or she is labeled as a boy or girl, providing the basis for gender identity. During the preschool period, children develop rigid categories of gender and are motivated to engage in behaviors associated with their own gender identity and the development of male and female cognitive

structures or schemas. As they move into elementary school or concrete operations, gender concepts become more stable and children seek out same-gender models to imitate.

Frieze et al. (1978) also discussed the role of culture in the cognitive-developmental perspective. *Unlike the identification theory of Freud that downplays the role of culture, or the social-learning theorists who pay heed to the role of culture as arbitrated by reinforcement and role models, the cognitive development perspective strongly emphasizes the interaction of children with their environment or culture and how culture plays an important role in influencing the child's cognitive schemata related to gender.*

*Vygotsky and Contextualism.* Another theory that is useful in understanding the importance of culture in the development of children is Vygotsky's theory (1978). Although Vygotsky's theory emphasized the critical role played by the social world or culture in a child's development, Vygotsky did not directly consider the development of gender; instead, he emphasized how culture influences mental functioning. Vygotsky pointed out how cultures vary widely in the kinds of institutions, settings, or contexts they offer to facilitate child development. According to Vygotsky, children generally internalize thought processes that first occur through interactions with others in the social environment. Children learn to use cultural devices, like language and other symbol systems, to solve everyday problems in their attempts to meet their goals within a social reality. Cultural beliefs, knowledge, values, and artifacts influence what settings children are encouraged to enter and what they are encouraged to learn. Language, in particular, helps children plan and think efficiently and logically. Vygotsky stressed that we must

consider cultural contexts when assessing cognitive development and thinking because of the culturally specific nature of children's learning. If, as Vygotsky suggested, culture constructs how the mind develops, then individuals growing up in different cultures may have differences in how they think about gender roles.

*Summary of Theories.* The various theories of gender development each explain the development of feminine and masculine roles in a given culture differently. Some emphasize the importance of the environment or social setting, while others view internal factors, such as thinking and identification with parents, as more critical in gender development. Although there is no definitive research that clarifies which theory is most accurate, all of the theories have contributed to the discussion of gender role development. The next section reviews the concept of gender roles, describes the various roles of women today, and summarizes critical role theories.

### *Roles*

What is a gender role? Multiple definitions have been offered by various researchers to explain what the term role means. One fundamental definition of the word role is that it represents a social position that is accompanied by a set of expectations and norms (Helgeson, 2005). One of the most significant roles one holds in society is one's gender role or the expectations and norms that go along with being female versus male. The expectations that women will be nurturing and men will be strong are examples of gender roles. But gender role is not the only role we experience. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, many women today take on the roles of spouse/partner, mother, student, and paid worker.

*Roles of Women.* One role many women fulfill today is that of paid worker. Women's participation in the labor force steadily increased over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Zika, 2006). Not only are women working in more significant numbers than ever before, but they are also taking on more significant roles in the work force. For instance, many women today train for and assume positions of leadership in areas that were once considered exclusively male.

Because of this trend of more and more women participating in the labor market, more and more women also want to learn academic skills that will better prepare them to be skilled in abilities that would lead to higher-paying positions. In industrialized countries, the number of women who pursue a college education has steadily grown over the years (Zika, 2006). In countries that are less industrialized, however, women do not participate in higher education nearly as often as men do. Beginning in the 1980s, the number of women earning advanced and professional degrees also increased. By 1996, women received 56% of master's degrees, 40% of all doctoral degrees, and over 30% of professional degrees (such as medicine, dentistry, and law) in the United States (Brannon, 2002).

An interesting study by Carlson (1999) investigated why some women in their midlife years return to school to pursue graduate studies. Carlson identified security and complexity as two important reasons. Security was found to be the most motivating factor and was related to job and financial security and the women's awareness of the need to maintain or gain skills in order to be competitive in the job market. Carlson suggested that a need for complexity is another reason some women return to graduate school. Three subcategories related to complexity include: challenge, change and growth. The

fact that these midlife women already had demanding roles within their families and communities supported the idea of complexity, but both the personal and professional challenges of returning to school motivated many women to add the role of graduate student. Change was also a reason for pursuing graduate work. Change was related to internal growth and external realities, particularly when work force conditions were seen by many women as a reason to go to graduate school. Personal and professional growth was achieved through graduate school enrollment and was clearly an important reason that many women identified for pursuing a graduate student role. Why the researchers chose to phrase the primary variable as "complexity," however, was not adequately explained and this term does not seem to match the subcategories of challenge, change and growth. Also, this research made me wonder if increasing life expectancy may be another reason why some women today get back to the role of student after they have settled into their family life-cycle of 'launching children and moving on' (Carter and McGoldrick, 1988).

Being a partner in a committed relationship is another role for many women. For some women, this results in marriage. For other women today, cohabitation has replaced marriage; for many more, cohabitation precedes marriage (Brannon, 2002). Historically, marriage for women meant they became defined by their relationship to their husband. Marriage for men meant they had someone to take care of the home and the children. Today, however, marriage may have a more similar meaning for men and women: gaining a partner, a best friend, and a person to share one's life (Helgeson, 2005). Some research in the United States suggests that marriage brings considerable benefits to both women and men. Marriage changes people's behavior in ways that favor physical and



mental health. For example, married men and women tend to live longer than single people (Helgeson, 2005). Hudson and O'Regan (1994) reported that women who were working full time while attending graduate school and who were in a committed relationship reported lower levels of stress compared to women who were not in committed relationships.

Despite the suggested similarities in what marriage means to women and men today, despite the possible health benefits, and despite the fact that men are more involved in household tasks than ever before, women in committed relationships still tend spend more time on household tasks than men (Helgeson, 2005; South & Spitze, 1994). Women are more likely than men to perceive this division of labor as unfair (Van Willigen & Drentea, 2001). Studies suggest that an equal division of labor is more important to women's than men's marital satisfaction. In a study of married couples in Israel, an egalitarian division of labor predicted wives' marital satisfaction but was unrelated to husbands' marital satisfaction. Other researchers have suggested that for the division of labor to be more equal in the home, both partners must have an egalitarian gender-role attitude (Helgeson, 2005). Researchers have also suggested that the division of housework may be influenced by ethnicity and race. Golding (1990) reported that Mexican American women do more housework than White women and African American men do more housework than Latino or White men and attributed these differences to cultural differences in gender role expectations related to home and work.

Russo (1976) labeled the social pressure that many women face to have and raise children as "the motherhood mandate". Motherhood is indeed a role for many women. Research suggests that parenthood is accompanied by more changes in women's lives



than in men's lives because women assume more responsibilities for child care and adjust their work schedules accordingly. There is also evidence that the division of labor within the home becomes more traditional with the arrival of children, even for women who are employed outside of the home, and women increase their contributions to household tasks when they become parents (Helgeson, 2005).

If many employed women perform the bulk of housework and child care duties, how do women manage these multiple roles today? Does the need to coordinate various roles have a positive or negative influence on women's lives? The next sections describe relevant theories and research that address these questions.

*Role Theory.* According to social role theory, differences in women's and men's behavior are a function of the different roles women and men hold in society. Goode (1960) discussed in his classic description of role theory how the total role systems of an individual are unique and can be over-demanding. This can result in role strain or stress stemming from one's multiple roles. Role strain can stem from role overload defined as role demands that exceed one's available time and/or energy. Role strain can also result from an interrole conflict, which describes the incompatible demands stemming from two or more roles. According to Goode's scarcity hypothesis, role strain occurs because human beings have only a set amount of time and energy. Excessive role responsibilities deplete the individual's limited supply of time and energy and this can lead to stress. Because individuals cannot always fulfill the demands of all their roles, they must move through a continuous sequence of role decisions and bargains.

The social structure or culture determines how much freedom a person has in manipulating her roles in order to reduce role strain or the stress stemming from her roles.

According to Goode, it is in the individual's best interest to attempt to reduce her role strain by demanding as much as she can and performing as little as she can, but because this is also true for others, there are limits on how advantageous a role bargain she can make. Estimates of the percentage of employed women who experience role strain vary from 40 percent (Galinsky & Bond, 1996) to over 80 percent (Carlisle, 1994). Galinsky & Bond (1996) suggested that this large range is to be expected because experiences related to family-work balancing are unique to each individual and can be influenced by numerous factors, such as whether or not there are children in the home.

*Work-Family Role Conflict.* Following the lines of the scarcity hypothesis, Greenhaus and Beutell defined work-family role conflict as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (1985, p. 77). Further, they added that there are three major forms of work-family role conflict which include: time-based conflict which arises when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another role; strain-based conflict which describes the stress produced when one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role; and behavior based conflict which is when behavior required in one role makes it difficult to engage in the behaviors required to complete another role. Role overload is one of the ramifications of work-family role conflict wherein an individual gets sandwiched between multiple roles that she plays in different areas of her life.

The wife and paid worker roles alone are not related to role overload or role conflict for women. Some researchers have suggested that it is the addition of the mother role to the worker role that creates women's role strain (Galinsky & Bond, 1996). Some

researchers (Redelinguys, Lucius, Botes, & Wet 1999) have also suggested that traditional values or the traditional viewpoint that women should always put their families before their careers and view their partners as the main provider of the family contributes to work-family role conflict. In support of this, other researchers have found that the less time husbands are involved in child and home care, the more likely it is that mothers who are employed outside the home will report stress and role strain (Galinsky & Bond, 1996). Where the family is in its life cycle can also influence the occurrence of work-family role conflict. Because this conflict can be greater when young children are in the home (Redelinguys et al., 1999), some women respond to this conflict and strain by planning their careers and labor participation around the life cycle of their families. They may place their careers on hold, sometimes permanently leaving the job market when their family responsibilities call for it. In ordinary circumstances, they would continue their careers after marriage, but might leave the job market or only work part time after the birth of their first child. However, Barker (1993) reported that mothers working part time did not report lower role conflict or role overload than mothers working full time. Barker also found that women working in female dominated professions reported lower amounts of role conflict than women working in male dominated professions.

There is also some evidence, that for married women with children, family role conflicts are more strongly related to depression than job role strains (Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985). Although correlational studies are not indicative of cause and effect, a study of married employed people in China revealed that men's mental health was more

likely to be related to reports of work strains than to family strains; women's mental health was equally related to both (Lai, 1995).

Early research conducted by Sarbin and Allen (1968) suggested that employed women are burdened with emotional and practical considerations associated with their dual roles as the worker and the traditional roles of a homemaker, a housewife and a mother. Research by Greenglass, Pantony, and Burke (1988) found that women's work-family role conflict manifested itself in the form of greater experience of depression, anxiety, and somatization, as well as greater dissatisfaction with marriage. Men suffering from work-family role conflict were much more likely to prioritize those roles and separate the two spheres of work and home so that there would not be a conflict between the two.

Several studies have shown that strains at work can spill over into family life. Matjasko and Feldman (2006) used the term spillover effect to describe the relationship between emotions experienced at work and those experienced at home. The researchers found that for mothers, greater pressure to succeed in their careers led them to experience greater work demands and stress that they ended up bringing home. Fathers who invested a great number of hours at work were more successful at leaving thoughts of work behind once they returned home. Mothers, on the other hand, reported that more hours at work took time away from tasks that needed to be accomplished at home. Bromet et al. (1990) also provided evidence for spillover in the working-class women in the form of stress spreading from work to family, from family to work, or in both directions simultaneously. Cardenas et al., (2004) also reported that more burdensome work roles were likely to break through the family boundary and that traditional gender-

role expectations were positively linked to women being distracted by family issues while at work.

*Role Expansion Hypothesis.* In contrast to the scarcity hypothesis and possibility of negative role spill over, the role expansion hypothesis suggests benefits to be gained from having diverse roles. Barnett and Hyde (2001) in their explanation of the expansionist theory contend that multiple roles are beneficial for both women and men because they support mental, physical and relationship health. They suggested that the additional resources gained by multiple roles outweigh the increase in strain that might arise from more roles and that a number of studies have shown that the healthiest women and men are those who possess all three roles: spouse, parent, and paid worker. This is explained by the stress-buffering hypothesis which suggests that resources from one role can be used to buffer strains arising from another role. For example, social support from coworkers may help alleviate distress arising from family problems and marital difficulties. Additional benefits of multiple roles can include added income, opportunities to experience success, expanded frames of reference, increased self-esteem, life satisfaction, similarity of experiences, and gender-role ideology.

Along with benefits and opportunities for success, the role expansion hypothesis also reminds us that multiple roles also offer opportunities for failure or frustrations, low-wage work, discrimination, or sexual harassment, all of which might contribute to role overload and distress. The expansionist hypothesis suggests, however, that role quality is more important to health (mental, physical, and relationship) than is the number of roles or the amount of time spent in a particular role (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Women

are less likely to experience role conflict, for example, when they have high incomes or a husband who shares in childcare and household responsibilities.

Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King (2002) examined the relationships between multiple life roles, psychological well-being, and managerial skills in two studies of managerial women to argue against the role scarcity theory and contest the idea that multiple roles only serve to deplete effectiveness at work. Both qualitative and quantitative research results were reported. Qualitative results suggested that the roles women played in their personal lives provided emotional support, practice at multitasking, opportunities to enrich interpersonal skills, and leadership practice that enhanced their effectiveness in their management roles. Quantitative results indicated that commitment to multiple roles was positively related to life satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-acceptance. Commitment to multiple roles was also related to interpersonal and task-related managerial skills. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative evidence from this study supported the role expansion perspective that multiple roles can be enriching to women rather than depleting.

Many researchers have provided evidence in support of the role expansionist hypothesis and some suggest that more evidence supports the role-expansion than the role-scarcity hypothesis. Randall (1988) discussed that contrary to the scarcity model that implies women have limited time and energy to fulfill all of their roles, greater commitment to work does not necessarily imply less effort allocated to other roles or a decline in their perceived importance. In fact, it appears that the workers generally manage their work and their outside work spheres separately. Evidence has shown that multiple roles can be good for both women and men's health because the resources



gained from one role can be used as a buffer from any distress associated with strains in another role (Randall, 1988).

*Coping with Multiple Roles.* Marks (1977) researched multiple roles and role strain and compared the scarcity approach with the expansionist theory. Marks concluded that in order to deal effectively with role demands, there are four conditions that have to be considered: First, there must be intrinsic enjoyment in performing the activities of the role in question; second is loyalty to some or all of one's role partners; third, there is an expectation of extrinsic rewards for the performance; and, fourth is the desire to avoid punishment that could result from non-performance of the required activities. Any of these elements may be sufficient to sustain a commitment to the role, and commitments will be very strong when all or most of them are present. Marks' primary contention was that human resources of energy, as well as time, are adjustable.

Other researchers have suggested that women who manage career and family do so only if they have strong social support systems and cope successfully with stress (McLaughlin, Cormier, & Cormier, 1988). For many women, a source of support is their spouse. Numerous studies have shown that being a parent is associated with good health for women only if they are married. Unmarried mothers may feel overwhelmed with raising children and maintaining employment because of the lack of emotional and financial support from a spouse. Women who cope most successfully with stress associated with multiple roles seem to be those who take an active, problem-focused, approach to their stress.

Redelinguys, et al., (1999) also discussed the ways through which work-family conflict could be alleviated for working women. Their suggestions included a) providing



maternity leave that allows women employees a certain amount of time to give birth and recuperate after the birth of a child; b) temporary career breaks that are closely related to maternity leave as they provide the female employee with the opportunity to have a break in her career which is longer than the time usually allocated for maternity leave stipulated by labor laws; c) the provision of childcare facilities such as crèches or the day-care centers; d) giving mothers an allowance so that they have access to adequate health care and child care benefits; and e) flexible working schedules which encompass a number of practices aimed at giving employees more control over their work-schedules, such as the benefits like “work from/at home” facilities or “flexi-timings” (the latter being a term commonly used in India that represents the option of choosing flexible working hours for employees).

Because of their need to be proficient on both the domestic and professional fronts, many women of today may make tradeoffs to manage their multiple roles. A study conducted by Taylor and Spencer (1988) investigated the criteria that women used in making decisions about how to juggle their many roles. These researchers found that career aspirations were the most influential in deciding what to do when dilemmas related to their multiple roles surfaced, followed by spousal approval in the form of emotional, domestic and economic support. The prioritization of career aspirations indicated how important the fulfillment of career goals is for many women. Additionally, Taylor and Spencer found that many of these women pursued their career goals despite limited spousal support, while at the same time expressing satisfaction with their employment and their marriages. A conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that

career-oriented women often do whatever it takes to pursue their career aspirations and still manage their household roles as best they can.

Clark (2000) proposed the “work-family border theory” to explain how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance in their lives. Clark suggested that ‘work’ and ‘family’ constitute different spheres that influence each other. Clark used the analogy that “work” and “family” are like two countries where there are differences in language or word use, differences in what constitutes acceptable behavior, and differences in how to accomplish tasks. Clark further argued that for some individuals, the transition from family to work and vice versa is slight, such as that between two adjacent countries that share the same language, currency, and customs. For others, the contrast between work and family is much greater, thus requiring a more extreme transition. Clark used the term border-crossers to refer to people who make daily transitions between these two settings, often tailoring their focus, their goals, and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each. Though many aspects of work and home are difficult to alter, individuals can shape to some degree the nature of the work and home domains, and the borders and bridges between them, in order to create a desired balance. Clark defined ‘balance’ as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751).

#### *Cross-Cultural Research on Work-Family Roles*

As Zika (2006) reminded us, women around the world today are attempting to balance paid work and careers with their family responsibilities and researchers have reported on cross-cultural attitudes for handling these multiple roles. Although the

research has been limited, this section describes what is known about how women in various cultures coordinate their multiple roles.

Engel (1988) investigated attitudes about women's employment outside of the home held by over 200 Japanese and American housewives. Both Japanese and American women agreed that one can be happy as a full-time housewife, and a mother should not be employed outside of the home when there is an infant or preschooler in the home. Engel found that Japanese women tended to believe more strongly, however, that a woman's employment will have harmful effects on marriage and child development than did American women. Japanese women also believed more strongly that a wife/mother should not be employed when her husband wants her home, or when there is a school-aged or teenage child in the family. American housewives were more likely to support the idea that women are capable of handling both homemaking and career responsibilities and that it should be a personal preference related to whether or not a woman works outside of the home. This study resonates the idea of the 'scarcity hypothesis' through the results gathered for Japanese women while the 'expansionist theory' is evident through the preferences indicated by the American women.

A study conducted Skeen, Paguio, Robinson, and Deal (1988) examined the differences between the attitudes of American, Brazilian and Filipino parents concerning mothers working outside and inside the home. The researchers reported that American fathers were more conservative in their attitudes about mothers working outside and inside the home when compared to their Brazilian and Filipino counterparts. This difference was attributed to the differences between developed and developing economies; in a developing economy the wife's income may be a critical contribution to

financial survival and a better quality of life for the family. When couples from each culture were compared, American wives reported more favorable attitudes toward a woman working outside of the home and less favorable attitudes for women working inside of the home than did their husbands, while no significant differences were found in the Brazilian and Filipino couples in their attitudes towards women working inside or outside of the home. The American mothers rated work inside the home less favorably than did the Brazilian and Filipino mothers and this was consistent with the American mothers wanting to join the workforce for personal and professional satisfaction. This study suggests that social factors, such as economic conditions, can influence ideas about the appropriateness of women working and the need for some women to coordinate multiple roles.

A research study by Zambrana and Frith (1988) examined the relationship between life role status and level of personal and professional role satisfaction by surveying Mexican American professional women who represented young, urban professionals who were members of the baby boom generation with a college education and high paying jobs. The researchers reported that having children affected both short- and long-term absences from work for this sample of women. Additionally, family took precedence over work and career goals for women with both a partner and children and that career roles interfered more with the parenting role than the partner role. Responsibility and control in the workplace significantly contributed to the women's ratings of personal satisfaction regardless of their parenting or partner status. Parenting and partner status contributed to reports of personal satisfaction but were not related to professional satisfaction. Possibly due to role expansion (Barnett & Hyde, 2000) and/or the benefits of

psychological buffers (e.g., Randall, 1988), women with the most complex role configuration that included the roles of a worker, partner and parent, reported the lowest amount job stress in this sample of Mexican American professional women, providing support for the expansionist theory.

Aycan and Eskin (2005) found evidence for work-family conflict in 434 participants (237 mothers and 197 fathers) in dual-earner families in Turkey with at least one child between the ages of birth to 6 years. They found that reports of work-family conflict had a negative relationship with reports of psychological well-being, marital satisfaction, and parental role performance for both men and women. Similar to findings by previous researchers in the United States (e.g., Galinsky & Bond, 1996), spousal support was related to lower reports of work-family conflict for women in Turkey. The Turkish men in this study indicated that both spousal and organizational support at work helped lessen their work-family conflict. Thus, following the idea of the stress buffering hypothesis from the expansionist perspective, the results from this research study also suggested that resources from any source, be it work or family, could be used as a stress-buffer.

Some women move from one culture to another. Inman (2006) studied first and second generation South Asian women in the United States. Inman described the 'cultural value conflict' reported by some of these women as negative affect that results from having to handle the values and expectations internalized from their culture of origin with those that are imposed upon them from the new culture. Women may feel pressure to maintain loyalty to their cultural roots of origin, while at the same time becoming competent with the values and norms of the new or the dominant culture that is their

current habitat. This requires the need to balance the two cultures, much like women who juggle the responsibilities of numerous roles and the work-border analogy of Clark (2000) presented earlier. Inman (2006) reported that first generation women were more likely than second-generation women to struggle with a conflict of internalized values related to intimacy in heterosexual relationships and sex-role expectations for specific gendered behaviors (e.g., demeanor, dress, interpersonal interactions) deemed culturally appropriate within the South Asian community. Conversely, second generation women expressed fear of being seen as "too American" and losing credibility within the Asian community. Inman also found that amount of religiosity significantly influenced retention of ethnic cultural values for second generation women and attributed this to religious traditions being strongly rooted in cultural practices. Education level was not a significant predictor of retention of cultural values most likely because of a lack of variability in education levels among this sample of mostly college educated women. Overall, Inman's research suggests that women who move from one culture to another may feel pressure to coordinate the sex-role expectations applicable to both cultures.

Thus, even though limited, this cross-cultural research on women coordinating multiple roles suggests similar issues around the globe. Not only can cultural expectations influence the roles of women, but economic factors, parental and marital status, and spousal support also contribute to how they manage these roles. In general, the research summarized earlier (e.g., Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Engel, 1988; Skeen, et al., 1988; Zambrana & Frith, 1988) provides cross-cultural evidence in support of the role expansion hypothesis that there are benefits, such as psychological buffering, to be gained from having diverse roles.



*Conclusion.* After reviewing the literature on the need for many women to coordinate their work and family roles, it becomes evident that this is indeed a universal phenomenon that is faced by women around the globe. What differs is how the consequences of coordinating multiple roles are viewed by researchers, as either a source of stress (scarcity hypothesis) or a benefit that supports mental, physical, and relationship health (expansionist theory). There is research evidence to support both of these positions. Because researchers' preconceptions or hypotheses about the effects of multiple roles may influence how they investigate the roles of women, the present study has investigated the effects of multiple roles without any preconceived notions related to stress or benefits. Additionally, most of the research on the roles of women has been quantitative in nature. Because a microscopic dissection of the intricacies or the issues concerned with playing multiple roles could provide greater insight, women participating in the present study have been able to tell their own stories in their own words about the roles they play.

#### *The Present Study*

*My Interests.* The research literature discussed above established that gender issues related to work and family are indeed a global phenomenon. Investigating how cross-cultural factors affect work-family roles is very interesting to me because I hail from an international origin. Before I came to the United States, I always thought that the way role-conflict existed for women in India was specific only to the Indian context. Being exposed to women from different ethnicities while in the United States has been an eye opener and has shaken my belief that women's issues and concerns about work and family were restricted only to a particular culture. In order to understand the universality

of issues, I figured that cross-cultural research would give me insight into the idiosyncrasies of the various cultural factors that impact women's experience with coordinating work and family.

Despite growing up in India where women's roles and positions in the social milieu have been hugely controversial issues and are still debated today, I was fortunate enough to be raised in an egalitarian environment where the values of equality were strongly ingrained in me right from my childhood. This exposure to conflicting ideas about women's roles, however, contributed to my interests in gender differences. Thus, the decision to study women's issues comes from a desire simmering within me from the time I was quite young and I became a strong believer in the ideas of feminism and ideology that focuses on the equality of the sexes. My fervor for feminist ideas and the fact that I am a woman are obvious reasons why I feel so passionately about understanding issues related to women's roles. Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) noted that feminist researchers prefer to research women because they wish to create knowledge that is beneficial to other women. In this way, women are social activists seeking to use their research to better the social position of women. Feminist research, therefore, helps lend a voice to the experiences, concerns, attitudes, and needs of women.

I came to the United States to attend graduate school. Once in graduate school, I became interested in research that investigates the stress graduate students experience. The idea to focus on mothers in my research germinated from observing my fellow graduate students who were mothers and who had to manage simultaneously their lives on the school and the domestic fronts. The ability to be competent both at school and at home at the same time appeared very difficult to me.



*Feminist and Narrative Analyses.* Feminist researchers have changed conceptions about what truth is, who can be a knower, and what can be known. Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004) posited that women view research holistically, as a process, and thus pay attention to the synergy between the context of discovery and the context of justification. Travers (2001) concurred that feminist researchers prefer qualitative research methods, like interviewing and ethnography, over quantitative research methods. The qualitative researcher begins with interviewing women about their everyday experiences, but then shows how these experiences are shaped by wider structural forces. The most distinctive feature of feminist qualitative research is the emphasis placed on a reflection about the research process, which is considered a means of promoting female cultural values in an academy which is still dominated by 'objective' or positivist styles of analysis. Additionally, the emphasis on the researcher and the researched gives feminism a distinctive character as a critical research tradition. The researcher is expected not simply to produce knowledge, but also to demonstrate how she came to view her own life differently through her empirical research experiences.

I also concur with Rienharz (1992) who critiqued qualitative research methods, talked about the advantages of case studies, and explained that feminists write case studies to illustrate an idea, to explore uncharted issues by starting with a limited case, and to pose provocative questions. Feminist interest in case studies stems from a desire to rectify research tainted by gynopia, misogyny, and male-dominant theorizing. Gynopia is the inability to perceive the very existence of women or to perceive women in undistorted ways; misogyny is the hatred of women; and male-dominant theorizing is the creation of theories that assert the superiority of males. Feminists use the case study method as a

research tool to document theory and generate theory. This method defies the social science convention of seeking generalizations by looking instead for specificity, exceptions, and completeness. Some feminist researchers have found that social science's emphasis on generalizations has obscured phenomena important to particular groups, including women. Thus, Rienharz suggested that case studies are essential for putting women on the map of social life. The power of a case study is to convey vividly the dimensions of a social phenomenon or individual life; this is the power that feminist researchers want to promote.

Additionally, I selected narrative analysis as the data analysis method for this study because it has benefits for the researcher as well as for the participants. To the sociologically oriented investigator, studying narratives is useful for what they reveal about social life because culture "speaks itself" through an individual's story. It is possible to examine gender inequalities, racial oppression, and other practices of power that may be taken for granted by individual speakers. Narrators speak in terms that seem natural, but we can analyze how culturally and historically contingent these terms are (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992 as cited in Reissman, 1992). Moreover, Overcash (2003) contended that telling stories regarding life experiences can be therapeutic for the person being interviewed, which has been termed "interview as therapy." One of the major advantages of qualitative research is that it allows the individual participant to determine the information relevant to the discussion. Feminist scholars refer to this as collaborative research or the notion of an equal power distribution between the researcher and those who are being researched because the person being interviewed can decide how the story is told, what is included, and the length of the interview. Narrative research looks for

trends or commonalities through thematic analysis that identifies common ideas and phrases that individuals articulate in their narratives (Overcash, 2003).

A qualitative research method was, therefore, an obvious choice or preference for this proposed study because a quantitative research method would involve me with numerical data and statistical analyses which would have never given me a realistic or a hands-on feel of the subject I want to research. Most quantitative research in the past has mainly focused on two primary perspectives – the scarcity hypothesis and the role expansion hypothesis. However, I selected a qualitative route for the present study that involved no preconceived notions of what to expect in order to be more objective in the gathering of information. Secondly, I wanted to be flexible using a qualitative research method where I could be descriptive with the data. A qualitative research method also allowed me to involve respondents in the active construction of information about their lives. Feminist ethicist Janice Raymond (cited in Rieharz, 1992) favored the ‘unstructured research interview’ that employs open-ended questions. Interviewing provides interviewers with an opportunity to access people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in words of the researcher. This is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women. Open-ended interviewing is also considered to be particularly suited to the female researcher because considering what people think and feel is an activity that women are often socialized to perform, at least in the contemporary Western society. It is also considered to be consistent with many women’s interest in avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with people. Another important point that

Raymond made was that for a woman to be understood in social research projects, it may be necessary for her to be interviewed by a woman. The many benefits of qualitative research are why narrative analysis was selected for this research project.

*Conclusions.* I strongly feel that even though many women today are on par with their male counterparts at work and men today are sharing more of the household responsibilities, there still exists the notion that men are primarily the breadwinners and women should be mostly responsible for the care of the home and children. Still today, these beliefs may be reinforced through the process of socialization and gender role development. The bottom line is that many women continue to balance their domestic responsibilities with their need to be competent at work, while at the same time trying to avoid feeling like or being labeled as an inadequate mother. One of the most intriguing topics to me has been how the psychological make-up of being a mother can be so strong that it may dominate or even interferes with the other roles women carry out in their lives. Because I have had the opportunity to view this phenomenon across cultures, my initial research on women had to begin with a narrative analysis of how women around the world coordinate work and family roles.

*Research Questions.* This research study investigated the multiple roles graduate women play and how they coordinate these roles. Specific research questions guiding this study included: What are the various roles that a mother plays at the time she is pursuing her graduate studies? What are the perceptions of graduate women about their respective roles? What is the role of culture in defining these roles for graduate women and their subsequent coordinating act? How do graduate women coordinate their respective roles? What are the other factors that influence how graduate students who are

mothers coordinate their multiple roles? Is playing multiple roles a problem or benefit for graduate women who are mothers?

### Method

#### *Participants*

Three women participated in this study. All three participants were married, in their 30s, and graduate students at a Midwestern university. One woman had three children and the other two were mothers of one child. Two of the participants were international students from India and China and the third was from the United States. See Table 1 for an overview of each participant's background characteristics.

#### *Materials*

An interview protocol was developed for this study (see Appendix A). This protocol began by asking basic demographic questions pertaining to age, marital status, education, number, ages and sex of children, and country of origin. Additional questions were asked about how long they had been attending graduate school in the United States, their area of specialty in graduate school, why they decided to attend graduate school at this time, how much longer they anticipated being in graduate school, and what their long-term plans were upon the completion of their studies.

Questions that assessed the various roles these women have in their lives at the present time were also developed. At first, two general or grand tour questions were asked; next, participants responded to more specific category questions. Both the grand tour and category questions are presented in Appendix A.

*Procedure*

First, approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this research was obtained. Next, participants were recruited. An advertisement describing this research study and inviting married female graduate students with children to participate was placed at the International Programs office on campus. The American participant was recruited by placing an advertisement at a community day care center located near campus. After each participant indicated her interest in participating, an individual pre-interview session took place during which the purpose and the nature of the study were explained, confidentiality was assured, and any questions were answered. During the formal interview session, each participant met individually with the researcher in a clinical lab setting of the university's psychology department. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interview began (see Appendix B for a copy of the informed consent form). Next, demographic information was collected, and the grand tour and category questions were asked. Whenever necessary, follow-up questions were used to clarify responses. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All responses were tape recorded using a digital recording device. Following the interview, each student was thanked for her participation, debriefed as to the purpose of the research, and encouraged to share her thoughts about what it was like to participate in this research study.

*Interview Analysis.* Because the aim of this research study was to explore the different roles graduate women play in their lives and what factors influence how they coordinate these roles using an interview format, the approaches for organizing and analyzing narrative information described by Lieblich, Maschiach, and Ziber (1998) and



Owen (2003) were followed. For instance, both Lieblich et al., and Owen suggested common themes be identified based on repetition of similar or specific words and phrases and the emphasis placed on specific content for each respondent. Lieblich et al., further proposed that researchers repeatedly read and review the responses in order to come to conclusions about overall common themes and if the narratives are overall positive or negative in tone.

### Results

The participants' responses to the interview questions are summarized in this section, organized based on the research questions guiding this study, and presented in alphabetical order based on first name. All names have been changed in order to ensure confidentiality. Table 1 presents a summary of each participant's background. Table 2 is an overview of their responses to interview questions.

#### *Amy*

Amy is a 30-year old, Caucasian female, who reported being happily married for the last ten years. She is also the mother of three girls, ages eight, three and two. Amy is currently settled in the Midwestern city where this research was carried out and where she was born and raised. She holds a bachelor's degree in general studies and is now working for her master's degree in elementary education.

*Amy's Roles.* Amy plays many different roles in her life at the present time, but she views motherhood as her most important and demanding role.

*I am a mother...that has a lot of other roles involved in it... I am a mediator, comforter, provider, and cleaner. With that, I do a lot of housework as well... As a mother...actually there's so much involved in*

*being a mother and wife...taking care of the bills and the house and the cleaning...the dirty diapers, fights, giving baths, folding laundry...it's a real struggle...*

Beside her primary role of being a mother, she also listed the roles of a wife, sister, daughter, daughter-in law, friend, student, and helper. For instance, one of Amy's friends was in a serious car accident and was in need of some assistance. Amy helped by collecting donations and doing his household chores like washing dishes, helping take care of his dogs, etc. Amy reported that she identifies with the role of Good Samaritan and she believes that it is her duty to also help all those in need, especially the homeless. Of course, last but not the least, Amy is a graduate student. She finished her undergraduate degree years ago but did not realize then that it was teaching that is her genuine interest. She wants to pursue a career in teaching and has ideas about how to change the current educational system. She wants to begin with elementary education and is taking more courses than usual at the moment because she is required to take some prerequisite undergraduate courses.

Although her life is full of numerous roles that require her time and effort, Amy described herself as happy. She summarized her current roles as:

*Sometimes John (husband) is like a big child...Sometimes, he is just so stressed out because he works far away...so I find myself trying to keep him calm and relaxed...comfort him...give him massages (and all). My mother-in-law also seeks my time and attention, at times...ever since she lost her husband, a little bit of neurosis has set in...so then, she needs me... sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously... I have three younger sisters, so I am*



*also a big sister... My parents are here, so I am also a daughter... Friend. One of my friends had a bad car accident, so I am also trying to do as much as I can for him... There's one more role...I think of myself as a helper to everyone...just kind of a purpose that is fulfilled (for me) as I help others...even if I don't know them...And finally, a student...I do a lot of coursework...*

Amy did not realize that working for and with children was her actual forte until she had her own children and this is what sparked her interest in returning to school, while at the same time emphasizing the need to work hard to support family members and help others.

*I think having my children helped me realize that this is what I wanted to do... I have always believed my parents to be very hard workers. They made it clear that it was necessary to work to **support the family** (with emphasis)... But more than that, work can be very hard. The most natural work to work hard at is work that gives a true sense of satisfaction. As a child, working hard to **get along** (with emphasis) with four sisters and two hard-working parents for the lot, many efforts on my part to **give** (with emphasis) and take felt forced. After having my own children, my sense of respect for my parents multiplied. When Katie (oldest daughter) was 4, I got a job (a sales position for a trucking agency). I excelled at the job, but it was **very** (with emphasis) stressful and unrewarding. I really started to become aware at that time that working for the good of children was better for me than working for any privately owned company.*

When probed at what her views were about the educational system of today and how she wishes to make this big change in the same, she showed her discontentment at the way values and concepts that are taught to children.

*Ideally, I would start getting involved in the political side of schooling and making some big changes in the way it is done right now... I think it is a horrible service! In many schools I see that teachers here and there who are not acting in the best interests of the children and just beating out on their creativity and individuality and self worth... So I know that when I go to those classrooms it's a lot better for the teacher who is going through the stressful times, the students and myself...I just know it...there's no denying it. So that weighs heavy upon me because they are all pulling at each other...*

*The current educational structure, as I see it, consists primarily of teaching children not to question authority and to just take it from teachers. Life is progressing much quicker than schooling. We are still pounding rote memorization skills into the minds of our youth, to which they feel no connection. Kids have more information available at the click of a button than what could be learned in a lifetime not many generations back. It is not surprising that students are rebelling (shooting others, dropping out, doing drugs). They do not feel like valuable members of society in the minds of their elders. They feel like a misunderstood burden. It is not hard to find a seven year old with the street smarts of a teen. Schools now are like prisons, cutting off creativity and training youth to*

*do our bidding. We need to be teaching real-life solutions to real-life problems. Students must work together among themselves and with adults, questioning and practicing critical thinking skills in order to make sure that they are equipped for a future that does not consist entirely of sitting at a computer, hiding your discoveries from your co-worker, and working for the benefit of some CEO and stockholders that they themselves are disposable to. Healthcare is less about the person now and more about the profit. Government and monopolies have an ever-increasing connection that further pads the communication distance they have with the common-folk... I believe that it is so important to instill youth with the knowledge that their opinion is critical to their future actions...that their lives have value...*

*Amy's Most Important Role.* When questioned about what she believes to be her most important role at the moment, Amy immediately mentioned motherhood.

*Motherhood...what I was born with the instinct to do. Helper is an extension of motherhood, and wife is a society-created extension of that. I feel deep connection with my children since I bore them. Because I feel they need me so much at this time (instinctual motherhood) I am most drawn to this duty now. John needs me less than the children do, as he is good at doing things independently and he has a mother too, so he knows...*

*Amy's Perceptions of Her Multiple Roles.* Amy expressed a myriad of emotions all at the same time when describing how she coordinates her multiple roles – happiness

at feeling successful because she does as much as she does and disappointment because she regretted that she can not perform all her roles equally well.

*"I don't spend enough time on any of these roles (with emphasis)...not at all...that could satisfy me...but I guess that has something to do with me. I'm always trying to make things better. When Rosy (her friend) had the accident, I tried doing all that I could. I went around and got donations, did auctions and I got (them) stuff worth several hundred dollars, cash donations. I still find myself so disappointed that I didn't do more...if only I would have done this in a different way... (you know)...constantly beating myself up even though from their end, they were constantly thanking me but I feel like I could have done so much more...and that I didn't do enough. As far as being a mother, it is so rewarding...at the same time, it is so exhausting. Just the same way with my sisters...I cannot devote enough time to it at all...it's so hard. Something or the other always comes up. I can only do one thing at a time...but I consider myself a very lucky person... I believe that I have a very good view on life but it can still be overwhelmingly draining..."*

Amy also expressed disappointment because she cannot manage the time and effort for things she might like to do for her family, like providing healthy home-cooked meals.

*I get very frustrated with myself because of the lack of time and especially with my husband's health (inherited weight and cholesterol problems) that I am just not able to provide a beautiful, healthy, great tasting meal for*

*them whenever they need it. Sometimes I just throw some cheese on a burrito shell and microwave it...So there's a lot of frustration with this balancing act...*

Another major frustration for Amy related to this time conflict is that she has limited time to spend on herself and to accomplish tasks adequately.

*It's a real struggle for me as a mother and wife to stay physically fit, doing exercise that I enjoy because I find myself rushing through things so much that I'm not enjoying what I'm doing...and I'm throwing things half way through... haphazard, losing things, getting so frustrated...feels like a whirlwind, as if time is going way too fast...but if I slow down, I'm not going to have enough time to get things done even in a haphazard way, so...(chuckled)...*

One of the other predicaments for Amy related to being a graduate student while at the same time being required to take prerequisite undergraduate courses with students much younger than her.

*I find myself getting very, very frustrated in front of 18-20 year old students... They have blatant disrespect for their teachers! So, instead of being a role model for them, I end up feeling close to the teachers and getting away from my class... I feel more of an outsider than a part of the class... and that is really hard on me because I get to hear comments like, "please stop talking so that we can get out of the class early"... (growled)...*

Her current job as a graduate assistant is another thing she does not enjoy because it involves working on a computer throughout the day. She would prefer to interact with people and work on a job that involves more social interactions. Further, she thought her current job does not provide her with meaningful work and is not related to her long-term goals.

*I would rather scrub toilets than sit and stare at the computer screen all through the day at work...I feel a lot of my personal talents are getting wasted (doing this kind of a job). I find it very frustrating, but then it is also rewarding monetarily... My children get to go to a Community Day Care Center, which costs a lot of money in my opinion...and that (my job) makes it possible to get that kind of money...so everything in my life has a more positive effect than draining. It's so frustrating and it's so tiring because my job doesn't give me as much reward as going and tutoring (at local elementary schools)...but it fills a different (financial) need...So I just need to temporarily suffer through it...*

*How Amy Coordinates Roles.* Amy mentioned social support from family members as crucial in helping her coordinate her multiple roles.

*I feel so lucky to have my mother-in-law here in town who is retired...my parents, who are also here...because when I feel the need to balance all my roles, I just ask for help...*

Amy jokingly mentioned her strategy "to recharge her batteries" through a good night's sleep when she needs it the most.

*I call my mom and ask her if she could watch all my children for a night...and she says, "Yes, bring them over"...so, with that ability, (even though it doesn't always work out), things are much easier...*

Amy also said her husband provides her with emotional support.

*Another thing is that John (my husband) is such a wonderful person, especially when I get hurt or when I need him...He steps up then...He'll throw a fit to have me pay the bills and do the cleaning and not have him to do any of it...but at the same time, when I can't do it and I need him, he'll do them all...he doesn't give me a hard time...he just doesn't...*

Lately, she has adopted a new management policy of prioritizing one job or role over another and this helps her manage and organize her roles in a more functional manner. She reported that her first priority and the principal duty associated with any role is being a mother first.

*Sometimes, I will call Sam (mother-in-law) and ask for her to watch my kids, but lately, I have just been choosing one over the other roles. So, if I have sick kids, work and school, I will call and say that I can't make it to work or school. That way, I can stay with my children at home and continue to work on school stuff and also get some work (graduate assistantship) done from home. So I'll do a little bit of it all, but at least be right there with my kids if they need me...*

**Amy's Role Models.** Amy talked about a number of people who she feels have influenced or otherwise been inspirational in her life.



*There's a lot of people...my parents, my mother-in-law because she is more on the "keep the children dressed nice", "don't let them wear goofy clothes", and "keep their faces clean"...while when I was a child, my parents always let me do and wear whatever I wanted...so I can find a way to keep that balance. My youngest sister, Angela... she just has the heart of what I would consider an angel...she really stands up for what she believes in and fights for the good of all people...I really respect her for that and strive to be like my little sister...My husband... he is not late for doing things and does not give excuses for not having things done...that I find myself doing that all the time because I feel so overwhelmed... My kids. Going from a teenager to the point of being a wife to a mother of three, I now find myself being charged with the duty of doing laundry, dishes, chauffeuring, cooking, and mediating, etcetera for a family of five. And I guess like...Jon Stewart from The Daily Show because he is intelligent and knows a lot about corrupted things in the world, government and seemingly the hearts of many people...but he doesn't let it just drain his will of living... he can still use the information and is very funny with it...so I'd say him. Tony Beurskins (a kid who I went to high school with). He's decided that he would like to do is to educate people of the possibility and benefits of building homes and other structures out of completely natural resources (sand, dirt, etc.) by getting involved with school projects in which the students can build structures. Then they can help educate and inspire their families. He is also starting a*



*business in which he and his brother disassemble old houses and structures, in order to keep those materials out of the landfill. Then they sell those materials for much cheaper than they can be purchased at the hardware store. You're expected to just throw away things if they're cheap...so, it just hurts me...and when I see someone doing something so wonderful it just lifts me up.*

Amy also reported how others have influenced her patience and good intentions.

*As children, my mother's mother put us in piano classes, gymnastics, camps, dance classes and so many things together. And then my childhood was not something I remember as being full of money...rather, it was full of a lot of people who loved each other and stood by each other to help when needed...and I think all of those things have contributed to my patience today. I think I am a patient person...so (you know,) just the fact that I know I have such good intentions helps me keep going. Even when I know that I am not doing enough, my husband and children always do little things for me...that help me realize the goodness and stay focused...(you know,)I'm happy...*

*Culture and Amy's Roles.* Amy mentioned both traditional and contemporary cultural viewpoints about the roles of women in the United States when asked how her culture influences her roles. She believes that women's primary task is to first be the caregiver, especially for their children, and considers that to be a priority over anything else. She also recognizes, however, that women today have opportunities in the professional arena, but are still expected to be nurturers at home.

*Women's role is... to raise the children...more and more to go to work...and continue raising the children and it seems like a lot of times that women will take time off (from work) to have children and raise them for a little while and then they'll take on all the bill roles and house roles and then they're expected to go to school...at the same time they maintain the bulk of all these things that they were doing before...The role of women is to look attractive, be intelligent but not smarter than the men...and very easy to get along with...Get married and have children...?*

Amy further discussed how women today are expected to be successful while at the same time adhere to a specific, superficial standard of beauty.

*I think there's just more emphasis on being skinnier, tanner, and having your hair this way... big breasts and increasing focus on all this and I just want to run away from it...I mean just the emphasis on false perfection and the whole idea of what is attractive...what is healthy is becoming so...so far apart from what is actually healthy...the purpose becomes just how others may envy you or desire you instead of how they may help you ...how everybody can become so self-centered... It's scary! Forgetting the real purpose that is you... the genuineness...lose all of that...*

Amy also reported how her culture does not adequately prepare women for the multiple roles they will experience as adults.

*I think a lot of it is just that it is so expected of me as a mother and a wife and as a student and worker to do all of these things...nobody really told*

*me how hard it is to (do all of these things)...you know...nobody really told me when I was younger how hard it is...So you grow up with just this expectation that we're not going to talk about how hard really everything is...and we're going tell you that as grown ups, we know everything and as you get older, it will get easier and it will make more sense but in some ways it doesn't but that's just something that is pounded in...we are raised that way...and we raise our children the same way...*

*Amy's View of Multiple Roles as a Liability or Benefit.* Amy expressed a sense of optimism despite the time and role conflicts she described. She believed all of her efforts are genuine and sincere and will be rewarded some day. There is a sense of contentment even with the experience itself, which according to her will really be her learning lesson.

*Really...all of the things in my life I thought were problems ... made me stronger...and gave me the ability to understand certain things to know that even my greatest problems can be some of my greatest powers. It's about how you choose to deal with them. Things made me realize how good lies in everything... not giving up on things... I just think that...it just takes a while sometimes ... things can be so much more difficult ... but still just worth it. To do always the best that you can...it's just the "take whatever you get" kind of thing...and make it into the best that you can. So, it is a definite benefit to play multiple roles in life right now...because I know despite that it might be really hard right now, it will still be worth all of this some day...I know it...just know it...It's just really been an amazing experience... with childhood, marriage and motherhood... (It)*

*can be so much more difficult but it falls in place. The only thing is to always do the best that you can...it's just to take whatever you get...and make it into the best that you can. It's very fulfilling then...all so worth what I have right now.*

*Amy's Themes.* The most prominent theme that emerged out of Amy's narrative account of her multiple roles was that of nurturance. She emphasized how giving care and concern, help, affection and warmth to others was important. Her benevolent nature was a strong feature of her personality that stood out as a common theme throughout her responses during the interview. Her compassion and goodwill were evident in her ideas about the future and for supporting her family. Her idealism came across in her descriptions of the changes she hopes to foster in the educational system.

Despite stressing frustration that she does not have enough time to do all she wants or needs to do, Amy's optimism is another apparent theme. There is a general sense of contentment that is obvious in Amy's narrative. She seems very pleased with her present life – her family and career. She described her efforts at coordinating multiple roles as being beneficial and looked forward to a positive eventual outcome for all of her efforts. Overall, Amy's story appeared to be one of hope. The optimism that she articulated throughout the course of the interview was contagious. Her account highlighted her perseverance in carrying out the multiple roles in her life at this point. Her grand themes of life were those of hope, caring, and optimism.

#### *Julie*

Julie is a 38-year old woman from China. She has been married for over ten years now and has an eight year old son. Julie earned a bachelor's degree in English linguistics

and literature from a university in China. She is currently pursuing her graduate studies in counseling and student development in the United States. Julie first came to the United States in August, 2006, when she enrolled in the Master's program. While she came to the U.S. by herself initially, it was not long before she was joined by her husband and son.

Julie had been working in a major city in China before she contemplated a geographical move across half the globe to pursue graduate work. Her job involved recruitment of Chinese students to attend universities in European countries, which triggered thoughts of gaining some international exposure for herself as well. Because her undergraduate degree is in English linguistics and literature, she decided that going to an English-speaking country would be best for her. Julie decided to pursue a graduate degree in counseling and student development because she felt this would be helpful for her career in recruitment. Julie is about to graduate from the graduate program and recently was awarded the international student award for her degree program. Julie's long-term plans include returning home to China.

*Julie's Roles.* Julie is playing several roles at the moment in her life. While her commitment to her roles in her family life are important to her, her current status as a graduate student and accompanying associated roles are the big foci of her life at the moment.

*... In the family, I am a wife, a mother... I need to communicate well with my husband to gain his understanding and support. As a mother, I need to help my son in his life and his studies...I am a student... I also work as a teacher (for her internship)... I think these are the main roles for me.*

Despite her roles as wife and mother, Julie did not mention the role of homemaker because her husband has temporarily given up his job and professional career to support his wife in her professional growth. The fact that he is a stay-at-home husband currently prevents Julie from worrying about any roles and responsibilities in their home.

*As a wife, I don't think I have a lot of burden on that role. My husband sacrificed a lot for the family and helps me a lot. Nowadays I don't need to do any house work at all...like laundry or cooking. Also, he teaches our son at home from time to time. Sometimes I think that he is like a supermom...*

The role of a graduate student is clearly a priority for Julie.

*As a student, I think I have been working very hard (right) from the first semester and even through the summer; I almost worked for 10 – 13 credit hours (each semester). So, this semester I have only 4 credit hours, so I have more time, and can put in all my energies into my thesis which is a very big project. As a teacher (internship), I am working 2-3 days in a week out of the town...(It) is hard but I also have a lot of achievement on that front...so, it's nice...*

However, being committed to her roles as a graduate student did not deter Julie from the roles and pleasures associated with being a mother.

*As a mom, I think I enjoy communicating with my son and I'm very happy to witness his growth step by step, day by day. Like yesterday, we went to his school because he got a medal and a prize in the hallway...(it was) a great moment for us. We took a lot of pictures and some videos for him.*

*Also we help him to learn Chinese. We want him to learn mathematics in the Chinese way, at home. So he's very busy and also he enjoys his studies here, both in Chinese and English. It is hard for him to study smoothly and successfully at school (and we need to help him)...*

Julie also expressed her ideas about a mother's role as extending to that of being a facilitator who helps her children in their development and growth. She believed that a mother also plays a significant role in teaching her children various things in life.

*I think a great mom is not the one who stays at home. She has her own life. She has that to influence her children. She does not only have to give them something to eat, something to play. Also a mom is an instructor. The role of a mother is also to instruct children in different ways. She can educate them, can give ideas on how to work on studies and career development later. So from this point of view, I think my own experience in how to work better or how to develop better is important for our son.*

**Julie's Most Important Role.** Julie did not select one role as the most important to her. She indicated how all the roles she plays are equally important to her, but one may require more attention from her at times, depending on the need.

*I don't think that any one role can be more important. There might be times when any one role can get more urgent (that needs more attention from me) but in the long run, they are all equally important.*

Julie gave an example of this statement that also indicates the importance of her family by stating,



*When my son was really young, I stayed at home for 2 years because he needed me more and only later, he was sent to the day care station. So only then could I go out, work for a while outside. (But even at) that time, I was still thinking about him all the time I worked. Then I trained him to be independent and that I could do my own work as well. Even as late as now, when I first came here and before my family joined me, I would miss my son so much that if I looked at his pictures, I could just not read or write...I missed him terribly.*

When asked what she does or would do if one role conflicts with another, Julie further expanded her previous statements.

*Actually in that (conflicting roles and responsibilities) experience, I will have a tough time. I think that if I have this kind of a situation, may be I need to quit for a while, to take care of my son and husband... I think what role is important depends on the kind of a situation. If the situation allows me to have more independence and do work on my studies, I can put that energy in that... But if my family needs me, I can sacrifice my studies for a while to help my family-my husband and son.*

*Julie's Perceptions of Her Multiple Roles.* For Julie, it did not seem like there was much of a struggle or conflict with coordinating multiple roles at home and school because she has the benefit and support of an at-home husband.

*I don't think that the roles of a wife and mother are very complicated for me. In fact, when I go home, food is ready for me (husband cooks for her)... (Giggled)... Because it is in the very natural way that we (husband*



*and her) have lived together for this long, so we have a very good understanding of each other. Even with our son, we communicate very well. Actually we are all very talkative at home...So if I am very busy, I just keep silent... separate (myself) for a while, and they can understand me very well and give me a great backup...give me my space...*

As Julie reflected on her various primary roles, it does not take long for her to judge that it is her role as a student that is more difficult to handle right now.

*The roles as a mother and wife are not very complicated, so it's easy. But I have challenges in the student role, so that is there... but I need to cope with them...Thus, the student role is harder these days than the other roles.*

Despite her apparent success as a graduate student, Julie further expressed feelings of stress and reliance on others in fulfilling her role as a student.

*Actually I'm not very strong. I'm always seeking help from others. When I was studying, working on my thesis, I was always asking for help, like I needed some participants for my thesis. Also, I sought the opinions of my professors on my thesis. This was my first thesis experience and I had no idea about how it needs to be done. Also, I ask my husband for various things. He is very knowledgeable. I can ask him for his view on some current affairs. He has a lot of time at home to read up, so I can ask him... he can read some newspapers, information etc. all that is important for me...*

*How Julie Coordinates Multiple Roles.* For Julie, family is a major resource in how she coordinates her roles as wife, mother, and graduate student.

*Firstly, my family gives me time so that I can do something independently without any interruptions. Sometimes my husband also says that if I cannot study at home, I could go to the library... and he could take care of our son. So, I really don't have anything to worry about...*

As an international student from a country where English is not her native tongue Julie reported a lot of support from her current academic department to help her cope with her student responsibilities.

*As a student, I got a lot of help from my professors and classmates from time to time. Like, I got the grants to do my interviews...some financial support to do interviews for my thesis. And they encourage me to try more. I had a presentation for a big conference last semester that they helped me with. I got a scholarship last summer for my studies. So I think I have a lot of support from them but I think I need to work much harder than this to get everything done in an excellent way that at least I will be satisfied with my work and studies here...*

Julie also mentioned how she combines family life with her school roles, and vice versa, as a method for coordinating her various roles.

*Actually some times, I think I can enjoy playing (all) these multiple roles at one time. If I have something in my department, I take along my husband and son with me...that way, they can spend time with me while I am doing my work but also at the same time, they can be with me... They*

*can see more of my study life here... Like last summer, we had a tour to visit some universities towards the south side. So they came with me to that tour and we were outside for a week. If possible, I would encourage the involvement of my family in my work life...*

**Julie's Role Models.** For Julie, her most important role models are her parents. The fact that her parents have been successful in and dedicated to their careers and the community has been big sources of influence for Julie.

*I think first of all, my parents...My mom was a teacher too... She put in a lot of energy with her students. She worked at a school for more than 30 years and was very successful at teaching. That is why I choose my first job as that of a teacher... My father worked his few jobs in the industrial sector. So his company asked him to continue to help even after he retired because he worked as a manager in the financial department of his company and he had worked very hard. So both my parents had very good reputations in their respective jobs; and also in the community at large. So, they gave me a lot of influence to work well. Also I remember their instructions still...I think they are very important for me...*

**Culture and Julie's Roles.** Julie is a prototype of the contemporary woman who tries to keep herself bound to the original cultural values that she hails from while at the same time keeps herself abreast of the modern-day roles of women. She believes that it is important for her to be consonant with her original cultural values that emphasize the feeling of oneness with the family and to cater to the needs of the family while also establishing a niche for her outside of the home setting.

*In the traditional Chinese culture, women like to stay at home or work more. Housework was more important than being more independent... But now in big cities like Shanghai or Beijing or any other big cities, women have more choices and options to live more independently and I think in the family, it is very important for people to get an understanding from their husbands or wives so that they can support each other and live life in a harmonious way. I remember in my grandmother's generations, women were encouraged to stay at home and do more household work, but from my mother's and father's generations, I remember they went out of home- they did house work as well as got out to mingle with others. Thus, they had not any one role to play (like just staying at home and doing that work)...*

The ideas that Julie put forth about her traditional cultural values are very strong. She described how schemas about family values and roles are transmitted from one generation to another.

*In China, the culture says that the family is the center of the society. We work hard for the family and everybody in the family contributes themselves to the family. As a daughter, it is important for me to respect my parents, grandparents because I got a lot of care from them ever since I was born. So it is also just important for me to take care of my son... (My culture says) that I have to take care of my children, no matter how old they are! And traditional culture for women is to take more responsibility for the family, so if I have more time for the family, I would do more things*

*for my family – spend time in cooking together , play games with my son together, we visit outside together... And then like a wife, I would like to share everything with my husband and he can give me congratulations when I succeed at that...*

Further, Julie added that the role of women does not imply confinement to the home environment, but extends much beyond that today.

*Actually I don't think there is a lot of paradox in the Chinese culture. We do not always advocate women to stay at home. Nowadays each girl in school has the opportunity to find a job outside the home environment. The female, when she gets married, can still work independently... resume work. Tradition emphasizes more on being family oriented, but that was old. Now there is a lot of focus on emancipation...*

*Julie's View of Multiple Roles as a Liability or Benefit.* For Julie, resuming graduate school and expanding her roles after a hiatus of few years has been worth it and she related this benefit to her country of origin.

*I don't think playing multiple roles is a problem. I think women in Shanghai who play multiple roles have so much opportunity. They are playing so many roles these days. So it's a benefit for me! Support from husband, great family and also from society...*

*Influence of Being in the United States.* Julie expressed her delight at being able to fulfill her graduate aspirations in the United States. She recognized not only the challenge involved in graduate work at this time in her life, but also the fact that being a

in democratic country such as the United States has given her equal opportunities to try various things. As a student, she indicated she has been treated very well.

*Actually I enjoy the environment here (in the American culture). They like to respect everybody's efforts and give a lot of opportunity, irrespective of the fact that you're a man or woman, or the age you might be at. It's a very democratic society where there's a lot of respect and opportunity given to everyone. The campus environment is very good for students... You get so much care from the professors, staff and people around... My experiences here have been very pleasant and valuable for my whole life. It is like a new start for me. No matter whether I stay here, work here for a while, or not...or I return to China, this is a great experience for me...Actually for my studies, it is a higher point... If I have a masters degree, I can find a good job anywhere with better prospects. Before I came here, I worked for a consulting firm sending students for education to Europe; so maybe after going back, I can work much more on a broader scope. I could have better opportunities for the future. My thesis can be updated because this is a just beginning spot for me...there is so much more I have to look forward to...*

*Julie's Themes.* Julie viewed her family, her academic institution and society at large as vital forces in helping her achieve her personal and professional goals, suggesting a collectivist viewpoint. She mentioned how she relies on others to compensate for her weaknesses and stressed the care and support she received from those at home and school. Julie also reported feelings of oneness with family members and

described how she finds opportunities to combine school and family activities. Overall, Julie expressed the gestalt viewpoint that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Another theme that Julie exemplified was the fine balance between her responsibilities to her family and to herself. She mentioned how she needs to cater to her family, but she also viewed improvements to herself and her personal accomplishments as sources of positive influences on her family. Julie revealed her supportive opinion about the feminist movement and the expanded opportunities for women in the world today. Fortunately for Julie, she has a life partner who has been supportive and encouraging and is helping her grow as an individual.

Finally, like Amy's story, there is a sense of satisfaction in Julie's life story. The big theme for Julie appears to be the development of her life - to make it more and more personally gratifying. Julie viewed her current academic endeavors as a launch pad into a professional world where she will have more opportunities and options to make a niche for herself. Although she has had to face multiple challenges related to migration, language and communication issues, as well as her husband's temporary break from work, she nonetheless has continued to carry out all of her responsibilities successfully and with poise.

### *Mira*

Mira is a 35-year old woman from India. She has been married for 12 years and has an 11 year-old son. Mira has an undergraduate degree in organic chemistry from a university in India. Mira married at age 23 and was a traditional at-home wife and mother both in India and in the United States before enrolling in graduate school. Mira first came to the United States in the year 2000 with her then three year old son to



accompany and support her husband who was a student in a doctoral program at a university in another Midwestern state. Currently, Mira is one year away from being awarded a Master's degree in biochemistry. She hopes to find a part-time job after she graduates. Mira recently was conferred the outstanding international student award in chemistry.

*Mira's Roles.* Mira is living with her husband and son and she is involved in the role of graduate student.

*Roles? Mother, wife, student right now. So basically I take care of my house like all women do and take care of my husband... Do all (household) chores ... In the meantime, I try to also finish my studies (school work) when I am at school so that I do not have any backlog left over to deal with it at home...*

Mira described a busy day filled with many activities when describing her family responsibilities.

*At home, I wake up each day at 6:00 am... I make breakfast, make and pack lunches for all three of us... Make sure that my husband has all that he needs so that he doesn't have to worry about anything, and then he leaves at 7:00 am... Then I make sure my son has everything...his bag is packed and all...then I drop him to school, and come here. Once he gets back home, I would call him repeatedly to check if he has eaten, he is doing OK ... He gets back home at 3.30 so he is alone for about an hour and half... So before I get home, I make sure he finds everything OK...The pantry*

*should be full... He knows what he needs to eat ... Normally, what we do is that we leave notes (slips on the fridge) like "mommy will be coming home at this time", "these are the emergency numbers if you need to call" etcetera... And then what he needs to eat (and all that stuff). I leave everything ready for him...I make him milk, keep his food in the plate, wrap plastic sheets around it, so he only has to heat them in the microwave and eat them... Because I know otherwise he won't!*

*... I go home and cook dinner for all of us, then Mohan (her husband) comes home, we eat together and spend time together...then in the meantime, I clean up the kitchen and stuff, Mohan spends the time with him(her son) to help him with his homework and all, and then we play games... He goes to bed around 8:30 – 9:00 pm...we make sure he sleeps by then... I tuck him in his bed, lay around with him until he sleeps, and then basically it's only after 9:00 pm that I get the time to spend with my husband after around 9:00. It's been a long day so that's when we get the time for us...don't get much time to talk...I mean even in the day, we do talk...but then we're really distracted then...I'm at work, he's at work...Ram (her son) is there otherwise, he's talking etc. So, that's our time together...*

**Mira's Most Important Role.** When questioned about her most important role, Mira instantly said that motherhood is the most important of all roles to her.

*To be a mother is most important for me... Because what I am doing right now as a student is not a big thing really, I mean I could quit right now or could even do it at any other time in life. I am doing it because I wanted to... but then it's not something I have to do or had to do it by any means...and it's not the very first choice. If it interferes with my son's things, I could quit it and go home! It would be a better option for me, so my job as a mother is a priority...*

*Mira's Perceptions of Her Multiple Roles.* Mira reported that the multiple roles and activities she attends to each day, along with other social obligations, keep her busy and sometimes stressed.

*Sometimes I'm really tired and depressed... It happens because there's just too much I have to do... Like sometimes there's some social cause I have to attend and I can't just ignore it and quit it... and then if I have exams, etc... and if Ram (son) has an activity that we need to take him for, we have to go...I mean when it's his game or something like that, we always be sure to attend it. So sometimes, it's just way too much...too many things to do and attend at the same time. So sometimes it becomes a mess and stresses me out... But then I have huge support from my husband, so he tries to help me out and then things work out... So, he is my stress buster!*

*How Mira Coordinates Multiple Roles.* Mira expressed how coordinating or balancing her multiple roles is imperative to her.

*It's very important for me to balance it all because if I don't, everything for me will be such a mess...specially my family will be such a mess... really...my family, my education – my studies will go down in drain...I have to do it all! I mean when I was at home, I used to think that "oh may be, I could do this later..."I could take it for granted, but now that I'm back to school, I cannot do that anymore. I have to do it all well! I have to finish it, if I have to do it, I have to do it right away or else, I wouldn't get the time to do it later...so, if things need to be done I just do it right away...I have to do it! Yes, all the three roles are all really important for me...*

For Mira, effective time management techniques are instrumental to her coordinating multiple roles. A major management technique that Mira described is keeping home responsibilities separate from school-related responsibilities, similar to the work-family border theory suggested by Clark (2000).

*Basically as a student, I'm here at 7:30 – 7:40 in the morning (as soon as I leave my son at school, I get here)... I'm supposed to be here until 5:00 in the evening, so I am right here all the time...I get my lunch here, so that I don't have to worry about going home for lunch. I do all my work here, my homework assignments, class work, research etc., here before I leave for home at 5:00 in the evening, so that I don't have to worry about any of that once I am home...So, basically, I do all my student related chores here between 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. each day. I just don't do any of it at home unless there is an exam...*

Similar to Amy and Julie, Mira also relies on social support from family members and individuals at school.

*Normally, if you balance it right from the start, it doesn't make you feel too bad...makes it easy then... It's all even out...but the world is not that even anyway...so I do feel stressed. When I have to do too many things, I have to do it fast... I have to be quick! Sometimes, I try to seek help from my husband and son. I have a very good advisor at school too, so he helps me with how to do things best, time wise etc...*

Mira also stressed how a sense of personal accomplishment motivates her to coordinate her various roles.

*Basically, it's the desire to do things that I want to do. I wanted to get a degree from the United States...so that was my goal and I wanted to always have a masters degree...back in India as well...there are times you think that at some time or point in life, there are things you want to do other than for your family...something just for you... (not only the family)...so going to school is something that I'm doing just for myself, and no one else... so it's just for me...helps me in that way...sometimes when I feel tired, I tell myself its for *me* (with emphasis). I wonder at times about why I'm doing it (making things so difficult)... so this thought just gives me the boost and I try to make up then...that I have to go that extra mile to make it all leveled...(intrinsic motivation)...so, when I am doing things (at home) it's all for*

*everybody...I mean they were supportive then too, but then, I have a need to do something for myself too. Before this, I didn't feel like I was doing something special for myself...but now I am and that is contenting!*

*Mira's Role Models.* Mira listed her mother and her husband as her major role models and support systems when she decided to return to school after a hiatus of 13 years. Her mother has also always been a source of inspiration for her. Mira acknowledged a deep sense of reverence for her mother, who was a living example of someone who led multiple roles (even though all were on the domestic front). Mira learned from her mother to keep faith in oneself, fight challenges and hold a sense of composure even in the face of difficulties in order to handle tough times and emerge victorious.

*My mom...my mom and my husband actually... The very first time I expressed my desire to go back to school, my husband never said no... He said yes instantly! He told me that I could do it right away... he told me, "you can do it"...and that he would help me with it. And my mother... (She) used to take care of everything... Take care of us, my father, we used to live in a joint family, she used to do everything... And she was always happy... I have never seen her complain, yell, worry... never...She would always say, "don't worry, everything will be just fine....Just have faith and it will be all OK"... (You know). Everything comes your way...and I don't know why but I never believed in that then...never then... and now I believe in it so much...I think it's really good... I mean even when I told*

*my parents, other than them and my husband, everybody else said, "are you crazy, you're going back to school..." My sisters, sister in law...all were shocked. But my parents were my big supporters, they would say, "go for it"... Every time I still have an exam, they call me and wish me luck...*

**Culture and Mira's Roles.** Mira thought that the ability to adapt to any environment in order to fulfill her tasks is what she learned from her culture and its values. The emphasis on the family as the principal system or the most important social unit is what the Indian culture values. She also considered herself to be fortunate to have learned how to be flexible.

*Basically, the Indian culture promotes the family, but I think, that they make it more flexible for you to enter a new environment and work in that. According to me, from the Indian culture, I have learned that I can do all the things that I want to do by making those adjustments...I can be in as many worlds as I want to...it's the flexibility to adapt and adjust ...the women in the Indian culture might be homemakers, but then if they are at home, they get complete power to run their homes in their way...if men go out to work, then women do all the stuff at home and then it's up to them how to do it all, so they get that flexibility to do all that they want to do in their way...I think that's what I have learned from the Indian culture...*

**Mira's View of Multiple Roles as a Liability or Benefit.** Mira exhibited a great sense of confidence and pride in her abilities to manage multiple roles. She never thought she would get an opportunity to get back to school at a stage in life where she was very



settled in matrimony and motherhood and was amazed and proud of her current accomplishments.

*I think it's a benefit because if I hadn't tried it, I would never have learned that I could do it... I never thought I could do it all! I had never thought that after entering my 30s, I could ever do it...I could go back to school after 13 years, but then I could! It's a big achievement for me... So, I think it's a benefit for everything, I'm discovering myself in a different light...*

Overall, Mira expressed positive feelings related to her multiple roles.

*It turned out to be just fine, I think. I mean looking at the way how things have now turned out is just great...I mean if I were still there (in India), even though I would be close to my family, but would probably have never got this chance to discover my true being...I never knew I had the ability to do so much...I never knew I could be a mother, wife, worker, altogether...it feels good for me...I am happy.*

*Influence of Being in the United States.* According to Mira, the experience of being able to go back to school at this point in her life was only possible because she was in the United States.

*When I joined the university (after a hiatus of 13 years), no one ever had a reason to point a finger at me even as I was attending school after 13 years ...rather, everybody has been very helpful...that was the biggest thing that was supportive. Basically, if I were back home in India and would have wanted to go for this, I don't think I could have done this.*

*Everyone would have been different, but then to continue with education at this stage was possible only because this is not India...living in a joint family, it would have been an impossible dream, but living in a single (nuclear) family, having all this support and facilities, it's working out so well...like I don't have to worry as I might have had to in India...*

Mira admitted that she misses her family in India, but feels good about being at a place where she is happy. She preferred her own nuclear family to the grand family that was an imposed priority for her while in India.

*For me, it's been great! I really like it here...In a way, I feel bad because I'm away from my family but other than that, it's wonderful! I remember the time when we were back in India... my husband had a business back home. He was always so busy and occupied in that...I mean he hardly had any time for family. There was only some joint family time, but no 'just our family' time... I saw how my son (and I) missed him so much. But here, just as soon as we get home, it's only about us, it's our time, so nobody interferes with all that...so I don't know, it feels really precious... The joint family set-up was such that there was not as much emphasis on having friends or a friend circle...Also because I was in a typical conservative family so I was just busy in that and nowhere else...*

Mira also admitted that being in a country that proclaims individual independence and personal choice (individualism versus collectivism) works out well because she knows that she has the liberty to ask her husband and son for help.

*I think if I were in India it would be different...see like if I have an exam on some day, I really don't have to worry about anything at all...we just order food from outside, somebody will put the dishes to clean, clean the house etc. But I know if I were in India, it would not have been the same, it would be different... If I had an exam, and needed to be left alone, that wouldn't have happened, so I think it's a good thing actually. It's the influence of the fact that I am here in the U.S. ...there's more focus on doing things independently...so that helps I guess!*

*Mira's Themes.* Mira's life appeared to be devoted to two primary worlds - her family and graduate career. Her loyalty toward both these realms was apparent in her descriptions of her daily schedule and how she works hard to accomplish her daily responsibilities both at home and at school. Overall, Mira's descriptions of her daily activities reflected both traditional and contemporary gender roles and themes.

Mira's need to accomplish her professional goals seemed vital for her not merely to give meaning to her own life, but also to break the stereotype of the "ideal Indian woman.". She described the traditional Indian mindset of gender bigotry as still being advocated by some in the conventional family system that provides women with the opportunity for one adult role only, as homemaker. However, Mira proves wrong the possible disapproval and traditional Indian notion that pursuing a career would prove detrimental to a woman also being a good wife and mother. Instead, she is a progressive role model for others to emulate as a woman who can manage her life on both the domestic and professional fronts and do justice to both of them.

Another of Mira's themes was the desire to do something personally gratifying. Mira dutifully supported her husband's decision to leave home and extended family to pursue his career aspirations in the United States. She optimally used this opportunity, however, to fulfill her unresolved educational/career dreams while here in the United States. Thus she indicated a strong desire to explore meaningfulness and accomplishments in life for herself.

Finally, similar to the themes seen in Amy's and Julie's narratives, there emerged the theme of general contentment in life for Mira. There was a feeling of general satisfaction in her responses even as Mira described working hard at all that she is doing.

#### Discussion

Overall, the three graduate students interviewed in the present study concluded that they were happy and that the multiple roles they coordinate at the present time were worthwhile and beneficial. Despite being raised in three different cultures, common themes in their interview responses emerged and included the importance of their motherhood role, women's ongoing family and household responsibilities, feelings of stress, the usefulness of spousal and social support, and parents as role models. Although there was a consensus regarding positive benefits as a result of having multiple roles, evidence for both role conflict and role expansion theories was evident in the women's responses.

#### *Importance of Motherhood Role*

All three women interviewed for the present study came from different cultural backgrounds, but the apparent change in these women's expressions as soon as the topic of motherhood was introduced was unmistakable. There was a sparkle in their eyes and

positive tone in their voices. All mentioned in various ways how they did not know how important the motherhood role would be to them until they had a child of their own. For example, Amy described how becoming a mother increased her concern for the welfare of children and was the main reason she decided to return to school to become an educator.

For all the three participants, motherhood turned out to be a prominent theme in their descriptions of their lives at the present time. Even though all three were strongly involved in their graduate careers, motherhood was clearly a priority. Both Amy and Mira listed motherhood as their most important role. For instance, Mira described how being a student was a choice she made and that she could and would quit school if necessary because of her motherhood role. Amy mentioned that her roles as helper and wife were extensions of her mother role. Amy also mentioned how her new method for time or task management placed her children as her first priority when she described how she now stays home when her children are ill instead of arranging alternative care. Although Julie reported that no one role was most important, she stated that if necessary, she would sacrifice her studies to help her son. Julie also described how she chose to stay home and not work for the first two years of her son's life in order to better meet his needs. Interestingly, Julie also mentioned that a "great mom does not have to stay home" but could still be a good role model and educator for her children through her personal growth and accomplishments. Redelinguys et al., (1991) concluded that the primacy of the motherhood role often results in women planning their careers around the life cycle of their families. Previous and the present cross-cultural research support this conclusion (e.g., Zambrana & Frith, 1988).

*Family and Household Responsibilities*

The three women participating in the present study came from three different countries and yet they all expressed thought structures or gender schemas (Bem, 1981; Frieze, et al., 1978; Martin, et al., 2002) that described the traditional importance of women as caregivers of the family and home in their culture. Previous researchers, both in the United States and cross-culturally, have reported how women in committed relationships still tend spend more time on traditional family and household tasks than men (e.g., Helgeson, 2005; Zika, 2006). This seemed to be true for Amy and Mira. They both described activities that involved taking care of their children, their spouse, the house, and meals. Both Amy and Mira mentioned how their cultures still expected women to carry out these traditional gender roles, while at the same time offered women more opportunities outside of the home today.

Researchers have suggested that for the division of labor to be more equal in the home, both partners must have an equalitarian gender-role attitude (e.g., Helgeson, 2005). This seemed to fit Julie's family situation; her husband had taken on the less traditional role of house-husband and was carrying out most of the child care and household tasks. In fact, Julie was the only one to describe her roles as wife and mother as "easy," Julie also mentioned how women from her culture often gain their power from running the household and described how there is now a focus on the "emancipation" of women in her country.

*Feelings of Stress*

Previous researchers have reported that mothers who work outside of the home report stress (e.g., Galinsky & Bond, 1996; Matjasko & Feldman, 2006; McLaughlin et

al., 1988) and all three of the participants interviewed in the present study mentioned stress as a negative consequence of coordinating multiple roles. Amy and Mira described themselves as the primary caregivers of their children and domestic lives and they reported both time- and behavior-based conflict in handling their multiple roles (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Mira described herself as sometimes tired and depressed because of all she had to do. Amy emphasized how she did not spend enough time in any of her roles and mentioned that she was often frustrated because of a lack of time to prepare nutritious meals for her family, exercise, or spend time with her sisters. In contrast, Julie had an at-home husband who was supporting her with all the household work and other domestic responsibilities. Julie described her student role as her greatest challenge and reported how she sometimes feels "not very strong" because of all she had to do in carrying out her multiple responsibilities in that role.

#### *Usefulness of Spousal and Social Support*

Previous researchers have suggested that women who manage multiple-roles successfully have strong social support (e.g., McLaughlin, et al., 1988). For all the participants in the present study, the usefulness of social and spousal support in handling the multiple roles in their lives was apparent, the latter being different from any other kind of support. All three women mentioned other people as a primary source of coping with multiple roles. Amy described how she calls on her mother, mother-in-law, and husband whenever necessary. Julie reported that she asks her husband, professors, and fellow classmates for assistance and how she relies on her family to allow her time to carry out her role as a student. Julie also described how she tried to incorporate family time with her student responsibilities by including her family in academic events



whenever possible. Although Mira was the participant who appeared to rely the most on time management (Ruderman, et al, 2002; Taylor & Spencer, 1988) and establishing a work-family border (Clark, 2000), she also stated that she sought help from her husband, son, and academic advisor when necessary. Overall, the participants used important people in their lives as stress or psychological buffers (Aycan & Eskin, 2005).

#### *Parents as Role Models*

For all participants, parents appeared to be strong sources of influence and role models in how to carry out multiple roles. Each woman viewed her parents as strong supporters, morale boosters, and sources of inspiration. Amy described memories from her own childhood related to her parents and other family members and how they helped and supported one another. Julie recounted the energy and dedication her mother and father displayed in their work outside of the home. Mira remembered her mother as “doing everything” and supporting everyone at home, while at the same time always appearing happy and never complaining. She also credited her mother and her husband as the only family members who supported Mira’s decision to return to school.

Participants’ responses about parents being a main influence in their lives support Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas that children generally internalize thought processes that first occur through interactions with others in their social environment, as well as social learning theorists’ stress on the importance of role models in one’s immediate environment (Mischel, 1966).

#### *Evidence for Role Conflict Theory*

Although from the interview responses it was evident that all three participants perceived the challenge of playing multiple roles to be an overall positive experience,

there was some evidence in their responses of role conflict (e.g., Goode, 1960). For instance, Amy and Mira both reported feeling exhausted and not having enough time to carry out all they needed to do as they faced the roles of being students and the primary caregivers at home. Amy mentioned how “nobody told me how hard it is” to carry out all of her roles. Mira stated that there was “just too much I have to do.” These responses are reminiscent of Goode’s (1960) ideas about role strain that occurs when role demands exceed one’s available time and energy and Greenhaus and Beutell’s (1985) theory of work-family conflict that happens when role pressures from work and family are mutually incompatible. How stress from one role can “spillover” into another role (Matjasko & Feldman, 2006) was evident in Mira’s discussion of the stress she experiences when she must attend a social event with her son on days when she has to study for an exam. Despite descriptions of stress and feelings about a lack of time to do all they wanted or needed to do, all three women mentioned in various ways how they expanded on their roles by becoming a student because they wanted to and the benefits they have and will gain as a result, providing evidence for role expansion theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

#### *Evidence for Role Expansion Theory*

The experience of playing multiple roles was viewed positively by all three participants, supporting the expansionist theory. Barnett and Hyde’s (2001) expansionist hypothesis suggested that the additional resources gained by multiple roles outweigh the increase in strain that might arise from more roles because role quality is more important than number of roles. Ruderman et al. (2002) concluded that expanding roles provide opportunities for emotional support, practice at multitasking, improvement in life

satisfaction and self-esteem, and improved task-managerial skills. Amy reported that "all the things I thought were problems made me stronger" and "it's been an amazing experience." Julie mentioned how she felt the need to work hard to feel "satisfied" with herself. Mira indicated that "I have to do it all...I'm doing it just for me." All three women voluntarily decided to enroll in graduate school and as Mira reminded us, could quit at any time. Yet, they all continued to pursue their graduate work because of the personal satisfaction and benefits their success in school provided them. The participants' responses clearly support the expansionist theory and provide evidence that any role conflict or stress involved was worth the price. The responses of the three women in the present study support previous cross-cultural research that also found evidence for the expansionist theory (e.g., Aycan & Eskin, 2005; Engel, 1988; Skeen, et al., 1988; Zambrana & Frith, 1988).

#### *Limitations of Present Study*

Several limitations must be considered when reviewing the results from the present study. One limitation is that only three women from three countries were interviewed, making it difficult to generalize the results to all cultures. Another related confound that could have influenced the results is that all three women were not similar in their world experiences. Amy grew up and continues to reside in the same small Midwestern town, and the two international students had multi-cultural experiences. Interestingly, Amy spoke the most about how girls and women today are still socialized to be homemakers and mothers and how her culture stresses material gain and appearance. It is not known how an American participant with multi-cultural experiences and a greater world view would have responded. Another limitation is that all three

participants were attending the same university and may not be representative of all female graduate students who are married and mothers, especially at larger institutions where they may receive less individual attention. The participants volunteered to participate in the present research by responding to advertisements. How they might be different from similar graduate students who did not volunteer is unknown. Finally, this was a qualitative research endeavor and no information related to cause and effect can be assumed.

#### *Future Research*

The present research study suggests future qualitative and quantitative research designs. For instance, a questionnaire could be developed based on the research questions and responses from the present research study that could be used to survey a large number of female graduate students at several universities and from a variety of countries. Future qualitative studies could match participants based on cross-cultural and other relevant experiences and background characteristics for comparison purposes. Using more participants for qualitative designs or even working in focus groups could be ideas to explore. Because the United States represents a potpourri of different cultures and ethnicities, it would also be interesting to study American women from different ethnic backgrounds about how they coordinate multiple roles. Several different content areas could also be added. For instance, how stress was experienced with more concrete examples, could be explored.

#### *Conclusions*

The present study provides evidence that despite cultural differences, women today still view their caregiver roles, especially the role of mother, as primary. Although

bearing and rearing children can be a satisfying and fulfilling role, some women also desire to expand their identities academically and professionally. The present research study found evidence of time constraints and stress as a result of having multiple roles that was qualified by reports of optimism, pride, personal growth, and a sense of accomplishment. Although support was found for both role expansion and role conflict theories, we do not know how the international participants would have responded if they were graduate students in their home cultures. Further research is needed in order to understand fully how culture influences women's willingness to expand and coordinate their multiple roles.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Questions**

#### Demographic Questions

Age:

Marital status:

Number, ages, and sex of children:

Country of origin:

When did you first come to the U.S.?:

How long have you been attending graduate school in the U.S.?:

Area of study in graduate school:

Why did you decide to attend graduate school at this time in your life?:

How much longer do you anticipate being in graduate school?:

What are your long-term plans once your studies are completed?:

#### Grand Tour Questions

1. What are the various roles you play in your life right now? Tell me about each role, one by one.
2. How do you manage playing all these roles in your life at this point in time?

#### Category Questions

1. What does each role call for you to do, such as the time spent on each, duties involved, etc.?
2. How does each role expectation/duty affect you socially, physically, emotionally?  
Any other effect and/or consequence?
3. Is any one role more important than the others? If yes, which one and why?



4. In your culture or country of origin, what are the roles that are expected of women? Which role or roles does your culture of origin emphasize for women?
5. In your viewpoint, what might cause the need to balance or coordinate two or more roles at the same time?
6. How do you feel when you need to coordinate two or more roles at the same time?
7. How do you handle or cope when you must attend to two or more roles at the same time? How does family and social support help you in coping? What other factors help you cope?
8. Who were/are your role models for carrying out the roles you currently experience?
9. What specific values from your culture do you think have influenced how you coordinate your multiple roles? Are these commonly held values in your culture of origin today?
10. Does having multiple roles seem like a problem or benefit to you?

The following category questions were asked of international participants only:

11. How has being in the American culture influenced how you coordinate your roles? Do you think that being here has benefited or hindered how you carry out your various roles?
12. What expectations did you have before you came to the United States about the place or Americans?
13. How would you describe your experiences here?

14. Have your experiences here been similar to or different from what you expected?
  15. How have cultural values from your country of origin determined the roles you are responsible for here?
  16. How do cultural values from your country of origin influence the way you coordinate your various roles here?
  17. Has being in the U.S. changed how you carry out your roles? If yes, how?
-

## Appendix B

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### Coordination of Multiple Roles by Female Graduate Students from Three Cultures

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by *Smita Srivastava (and faculty sponsor Dr. Linda Leal)*, from the *Psychology Department* at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is designed for research purposes. This study will examine the various roles that mothers play at the time they are pursuing their graduate studies, their perceptions of their respective roles, how they coordinate those roles, and the role of culture in defining, influencing, and coordinating these roles.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-session interview with the principal investigator of this study. During this interview, you will be asked questions about the many roles you participate in as a graduate student and mother. Sample questions include, "What are the various roles you play in your life right now?" and "How do you deal with these different roles when you need to attend to two or more at the same time?"

The interview will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you. Possible locations for the interview include the psychology department's clinical lab located in room 3125 in the physical sciences building on EIU's campus or in your home. The interview is expected to last at least 45 minutes. Your responses will be audio-recorded using a digital audio-recording device.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

No potential risks or discomforts are anticipated if you choose to participate. You may, of course, terminate your participation at any time or choose not to respond to specific questions without penalty.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participating in this research will allow you to reflect on the multiple roles you handle and coordinate and what has influenced these roles.

Because women from various cultures will be interviewed, the results from this study may also potentially benefit society's understanding of the impact on culture on women's management of multiple roles.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION**

Participating in this research project will provide you with the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the many roles you participate in as a mother and a graduate student. You can also request a summary of the results of this research study so that you may become familiar with what women from other cultures had to say.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information that you provide will remain confidential. No identifying information will be indicated in any reports of this research. The audio tapes will be kept in a secure location that only the principal investigator and other members of the thesis committee (Dr. Linda Leal, Dr. Ronan Bernas and Dr. Anu Sharma) will have access to. The audio tapes will be destroyed once this research project (and thesis) has been completed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question or questions without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Smita Srivastava  
151 University Apartments, Charleston, IL 61920.  
Telephone - (404) 704-7108  
Email: [ssmita\\_4@yahoo.com/ssrivastava@eiu.edu](mailto:ssmita_4@yahoo.com/ssrivastava@eiu.edu)

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Linda Leal  
4055 Physical Science Building  
Eastern Illinois University  
Telephone: (217) 581-2158  
Email: [lleal@eiu.edu](mailto:lleal@eiu.edu)

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board  
Eastern Illinois University  
600 Lincoln Ave,  
Charleston, IL 61920  
Telephone: (217) 581-8576  
Email: [eiuirb@eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@eiu.edu)

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You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

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I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

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Printed Name of the Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

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Signature of Investigator

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Date

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If you would like a summary of the research findings, please complete and turn in the following:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Table 1

## Summary of Participants' Demographic Information

	<u>Amy</u>	<u>Julie</u>	<u>Mira</u>
<u>Age</u>	30	38	35
<u>Children</u>	3 girls, ages 8, 3 & 2	8-yr. old son	11-yr. old son
<u>Marital Status</u>	Married 10 years (husband employed)	Married 10 years (house-husband)	Married 12 years (husband employed)
<u>Country of Origin</u>	United States	China	India
<u>Undergraduate Degree</u>	General Studies	English Linguistics & Literature	Chemistry
<u>Graduate Studies</u>	Elementary Education	Counseling & Student Develop.	Chemistry
<u>Why Returned To School</u>	Unsatisfying job & had children	Age of son & to expand career	Husband completed his schooling
<u>Long-term Plans</u>	Teacher & influence educational policy	Work experience in U.S. & return to China	Part-time employment

Table 2

## Overview of Participants' Interview Responses

	<u>Amy</u>	<u>Julie</u>	<u>Mira</u>
<u>Roles Mentioned</u>	Mother Wife Student Graduate Assistant Daughter Daughter-in-law Friend Good Samaritan	Mother Wife Student Teacher/Intern	Mother Wife Student
<u>Most Important Role</u>	Mother	All Equal	Mother
<u>Sources of Role Support</u>	Husband Mother Priority system	Husband Academic personnel	Husband Prioritization & time management Family-school border
<u>Role Models</u>	Parents Other family members	Parents	Mother Husband
<u>Negative Aspects of Multiple Roles</u>	Time conflicts Stress Limited time for self	Stress	Time conflicts Stress
<u>Positive Aspects of Multiple Roles</u>	Makes me stronger Future outcomes	Accomplishments Role model for son	Accomplishments Doing what I want to do—for me
<u>Overall View of Multiple Roles</u>	Beneficial	Beneficial	Beneficial